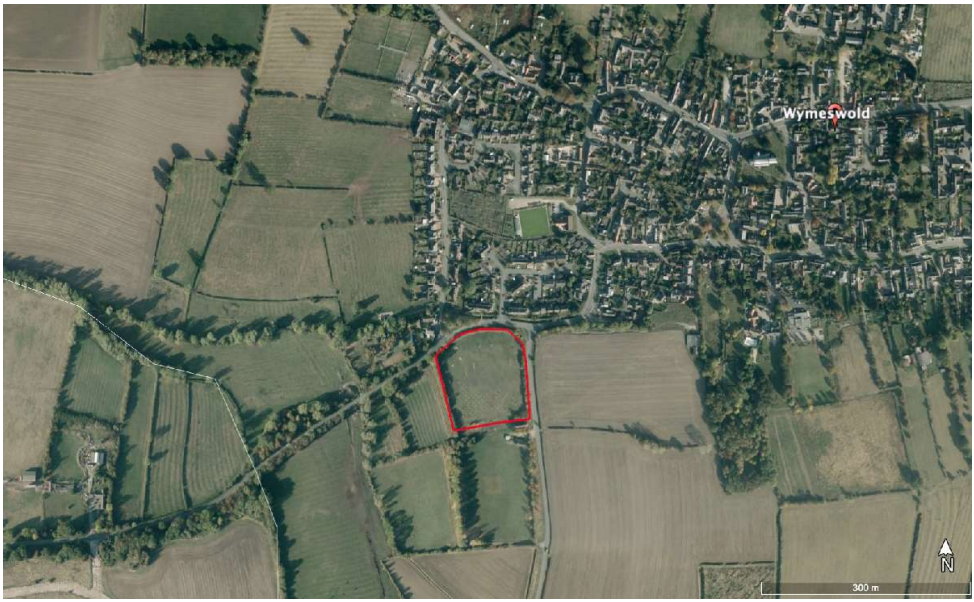
Wymeswold Washdyke Community Orchard

Richard Ellison

This account is a short history of the development, largely between 2007 and 2015, of the Washdyke field into a village amenity maintained by Wymeswold Parish Council. It records community action leading to highly successful and positive environment improvement and support of the entire community.

Location

Washdyke field is situated at the corner of Burton Lane and Brook Street and according to the large scale Ordnance Survey map of about 1892 the field is 4.462 acres in size.



Location of the Washdyke to the south-west of Wymeswold.

Formation of the Washdyke Community Association

Early in 2007, Wymeswold Parish Council challenged villagers to come up with a project, involving as many villagers as possible, to develop the previously under-used Washdyke field as a community space.

The Enclosure Act in 1757, when the entire Wymeswold Parish was subdivided into fields, apportioned the Washdyke to the 'trustees of Wymeswold Town', known now as the Parochial Church Council (PCC). The PCC as, for many years, rented the Washdyke to the Parish Council.

At a public open meeting held in May 2007 in the Windmill Inn, organised by Richard Ellison, the development of the Washdyke into a community orchard and play area was agreed by the forty or so people present, including the then-Chair of the Parish Council, Nick Shaw. The Washdyke Community Association was born and a committee of about twelve set up, with co-chairs Richard Ellison (to deal with the orchard) and Charles Collington (after 2010 Dan Pickles) to lead the development of a play area adjacent to the orchard, a Secretary (Audrey Lund) and a Treasurer (Jane Bowley). A committee meeting, in June 2007, was the first of sixty-three, the final one being in September 2015 when the Association was wound up and responsibility for maintaining the Washdyke amenity passed back to the Parish Council.

Planning the orchard

A constitution, bank account and, ultimately, charitable status were set up by the Association so that fund raising could be carried out and gift aid claimed against donations. Results were quickly achieved, particularly fundraising for orchard trees which, by October 2007, had raised sufficient sponsorship for the purchase of 122 trees, stakes, tree ties and labels. It had been already planned that room existed for only 122 trees and the princely sum of £25 had been set to cover the cost of each tree, a label denoting the sponsors' name and the tree variety, maintenance, and a fund to cover possible replacements. In the event, the campaign was so successful that sponsorship was offered for more than 130 trees.

What to plant? It was decided that a variety of fruit trees with, as far as possible, reasonably local provenance should be purchased: eating, cooking

and crab apple (64), pear (14), cherry (8), damson (6), plum (14), gage (4), quince (2), Nottingham Medlar (2), almond (1) walnut (2), cobnut (2), hazel (1) and mulberry (2). Included was a graft from Newton's famous apple tree at Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire, a falling fruit from which reputedly led to his theory about gravity. The trees were bought mainly as 2 to 3 year-old whips from reputable dealers, mainly John Morris at Costock Nursery, Deacon's Nursery on the Isle of Wight, and Keepers Nursery at Maidstone. Most of the apple trees had an M25 rootstock which means they will mature into quite large trees and for this reason it was decided to plant them 5 metres apart so that they would not interfere with each other during growth. This strategy at the time of writing (2020) has worked well.

Planting the Washdyke Orchard

In December 2007, in a torrential downpour, fifty Wymeswold villagers of all ages turned up to plant the first tranche of trees guided by Colin Creaser. The rainfall only served to emphasise that the soil was thin and underneath was sticky brown and grey boulder clay deposited from the ice sheet that covered the area half a million years ago. The planting holes rapidly filled with water

Spring 2011

and in a few cases drainage channels were dug so that the trees weren't drowned before they could grow. Undeterred, the volunteers returned in more clement conditions in January 2008 to complete the job.

Subsequent developments on Washdyke Field

By January 2008 a questionnaire to householders established ideas about the most popular uses for the Washdyke. By August 2009 football goals had been donated by the Football Association and fundraising for outdoor fitness equipment and a series of jumps for a BMX bike trail was well under way. This was led with great success by Kate Clift and after 2011 by Lesley Blount. At the end of this account is a list of the donations and other sources of income to the Washdyke Community Association over the period 2007 to 2015.

Fitness equipment, funded largely by Leicestershire County Council, and a zip wire and pendulum swing funded by Veolia Environment Trust were all in place by 2012. By then the main objectives set for the Washdyke had been achieved, benches and picnic tables were in place, and an analemmatic sundial with instructions for use had been installed close to the northern boundary of the field. (The sundial uses the shadow cast by a person standing on a prescribed point, their shadow falling on one of a series of hour stones set on the ground.) Although by then the majority of the trees had become established and some were bearing a small amount of fruit, the poor soil conditions contributed to some losses which were replaced using funds raised over the years at village events such as the Duck Race and Garden Walkabout. Even so, in the first twelve years, until 2020, there have been only about fifteen losses. Funds were obtained to lay the hedge along Burton Lane and the one between the Washdyke and the field to the west.

Spring 2015

Community involvement with what had rapidly become an amenity for dog walkers, picnicers and playing children was further strengthened by apple pressing events in 2012 and 2015 assisted by Transition Loughborough, a charity promoting environmental awareness, recycling etc. A wooden fence was erected along the southern side of the Washdyke and, after lengthy negotiation, a length of the central part was designed to be removed annually to prevent damage from the adjacent annual scouts' bonfire. Now the Washdyke is used annually as a temporary car park for the annual Garden Walkabout and Duck Race.

In conclusion, it has been estimated that more than two thousand days of volunteer time has gone into planning, setting up and maintaining the Washdyke:– quite a community achievement.

Autumn 2018

committee members

Jo Applebee
Wayne Applebee
Jane Bowley, Treasurer
Lesley Blount
Gill Clarke
Kate Clift
Charles Collington co chair
Colin Creaser
Lorraine Ellison
Richard Ellison co chair
Ken Holloway
Audrey Lund, Secretary
Andy Latham
Neil Mansfield
Pauline Marriott
Maggie Johnson
Susan Patterson
Dan Pickles , co chair
Veronica Shaw

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Minutes of AGMs, copies of questionnaires, spreadsheets about the trees, and a copy of a tree certificate etc are held in the WHO archive.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Washdyke Project Timeline

June 2007 – Committee established, bank account opened, planning permission obtained.

September 2007 – 122 trees sponsored at £25 each. Gift Aid claimed.

Nov/Dec 2007 – Planting of trees and 500 daffodils

January 2008 – Consultation about Play Area – target ages 10-16

May 2008 – 1st Plant Stall at Duck Race, then every year since.

November 2008 – 1st AGM and constitution agreed.

August 2009 – New Football Goals

October 2009 – Zipwire and Pendulum Swing in place

November 2009 – BMX Track constructed

November 2010 – Posts with plaques sited by trees.

April 2011 – 3 pieces of outdoor fitness equipment bought

June 2011 – Supporters List created

November 2011 – Consultation of residents via questionnaire – 40 returned.

May 2012 – 2 pieces of fitness equipment installed

June 2012 – Stone sundial built

October 2012 – Fruit Pressing Event – again in October 2015

December 2012 – Side hedge layed.

January 2013 – Fence and gate adjacent to Scout Land constructed

February 2013 – 87 whips planted to form hedge along southern boundary

April 2014 – Hedge on Burton Lane layed

May 2015 – Information Board installed by the sundial.

September 2015 – 63rd and last committee meeting.

Funding Sources from the village

Parish Council: In addition to annual payments for mowing, hedge maintenance, insurance and safety inspections, the Parish Council has funded The Washdyke Project in the following ways:

£100 to open bank account and £100 from Best Village Competition

£700 for two benches

Provided the funds for the initial planning application and provision of car parking spaces.

Completed extra work on the cycle track, installed a new kissing gate on Hoton Road, a stile over top fence and signage for 2 gates.

Open Gardens Committee:

Donations from the proceeds of annual garden walkabout weekends since 2008 have provided two picnic tables, two pedestrian entrance gates and money to buy bulbs.

In addition, £50 donation each year for car parking on the Washdyke has increased total amount given to £2650.

Village Project Fund from Duck Race:

Applications to the Project Fund resulted in money for Play Equipment, Signage for Entrance Gate, Sundial and Information Board – a total of £1700.

Washstock Music event: Donations of £747

Plant Stall at Duck Race: £1,336

Table Top Sale: £427

Sponsorship of Trees: £3050

Gift Aid: £956

2 Benches sponsored by C. Collington and The Lamb Family.

Funding from other sources

Melton Mowbray Building Society - £100

Loughborough Building Society - £460 for a bench

East Midlands Airport Community Fund - £750 for a picnic table

Football Association - £417 for football goals

Veolia Environmental Trust - £15,000 for Zipwire and Pendulum Swing

Charnwood Borough Council - £12,010 for BMX Cycle Track

Leicestershire County Council - £5,427 for outdoor fitness equipment

BIFFA - £13,258 for side hedge laying

Lottery Fund - £2,772 for top fence and hedge laying

Groundwork – 26 hedging trees

Woodland Trust – 65 hedging trees